



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Economic Development
1 Ashburton Place, Room 2101, Boston, MA 02108

FY2025 Urban Agenda Grant Program

Program Guidelines

I. INTRODUCTION

A. About the Program

The Urban Agenda Grant Program is a competitive grant program that funds community-driven responses to community-defined economic opportunities. Projects or programs funded under this program build leadership, collaboration, and capacity within Massachusetts cities and towns.

The Executive Office of Economic Development recognizes that urban centers face unique economic and quality of life challenges, and that the path to success lies in tapping into the unique local assets that they already possess, rather than in one-size-fits-all directives from government. Urban Agenda is focused on supporting economic vitality and cultivating stronger urban neighborhoods across the entire Commonwealth.

Successful applications come from a coalition of local organizations working together in a single city, town, or neighborhood. Applications must be submitted by either a municipal government or non-profit that will serve as the lead applicant on behalf of the group and administer the grant if awarded.

An overview of the program’s core criteria is below. For the full review criteria, see Section II: Evaluation.



B. FY25 One Stop Standard Guideline Language

Urban Agenda is part of the [Community One Stop for Growth](#), a single application portal and collaborative review process of community and economic development grant programs that make targeted investments

based on a Development Continuum. It is designed to allow applicants to apply for consideration of multiple sources of funding to support multiple phases and facets of a project. For more information, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit www.mass.gov/onestop.

The One Stop Full Application is organized into the following sections:

- Form 1 – Applicant Information
- Form 2 – Project Information
- Form 3 – Certification of Application Submission Authority

In order to be considered for Urban Agenda funding, applicants must include complete responses to all required questions.

Additional Information

- For information on the One Stop, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit www.mass.gov/onestop.
- The Expression of Interest is an optional, but highly recommended form that allows an applicant to seek guidance from the One Stop partner agencies. Applicants are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest prior to starting their Full Application(s). Visit the [One Stop Expression of Interest webpage](#) for more information and access to the Expression of Interest form.
- All applications must be submitted electronically. The online application portal, IGX, can be accessed at <https://eohed.intelligrants.com>. An online webinar outlining the use of the system will be available on the site. The application form template and link to the portal will also be available on the [One Stop webpage](#).
- Eligible applicants may submit funding requests for more than one Community Activation and Placemaking project in the same round. However, a separate application is required for each project. Each proposal will be evaluated independently against the criteria and will be competing directly with all other proposals.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to be aware of all requirements and deadlines, and to ensure that their application is complete and submitted on time. All applications will be logged as to date and time received and kept on file as public record. Late submissions will not be considered.
- The Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) reserves the right to request additional information from the applicant or external sources as may be necessary in order to complete the application review. EOED also reserves the right to recommend partial grant awards, as deemed appropriate.

C. PROGRAM FEATURES AND REQUIREMENTS

Urban Agenda FY2025	
Maximum Award	\$100,000
Grant use	General operating support for innovative and collaborative community economic development projects.
Project Duration	Timeline should be no longer than 6 months (January through June 2025)
Project Categories	<p>Entrepreneurship, Small Business Development and Technical Assistance;</p> <p>Workforce Development, Training Initiatives, and Job Pipelines;</p> <p>Community Organizing and Leadership Development</p>
Eligible lead applicant	Municipality or IRS Tax-Exempt Nonprofit Organization
Coalition Required?	Yes
Eligible project partners	Municipality, Community-Based Organizations, Schools, Local Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Private Sector Partners, Neighborhood Associations, etc.
Eligible Communities	All Municipalities.
Review criteria	<p>Target Population</p> <p>Outcomes & Impacts</p> <p>Project Need</p> <p>Collaboration & Partnerships</p> <p>Capacity to Succeed</p> <p>(see full criteria below)</p>
Grant Type	Cost Reimbursement (all grant expenses must be documented and reported quarterly)

D. Eligible Applicants

Lead Applicant

Lead applicants can be either Massachusetts municipal governments or nonprofit organizations. The lead applicant manages the grant funds and is responsible for grant reporting on behalf of the coalition.

Coalitions, Collaborations & Partnerships

The lead applicant must show that they are working as part of an active collaboration – that is, that they have at least one partner in the community (and preferably several) all working together on the project. Ideally, these coalitions will include partners from the private and public sectors as well as community groups. Active and collaborative coalitions that receive support from this program are deeper and broader than a mere referral or financial relationship between partners.

It is important to note that Urban Agenda is intended to support the work being done by a community, not by any individual agency that happens to be working in the community. The idea is for projects to be developed and agreed upon by a community coalition or consortium. It is not meant to support or expand the reach of the municipality or any one organization.

No Duplicate Applications

All members of a coalition or partnership should collaborate to submit a single application. Multiple applications for the same or substantially similar projects will not be funded, even if the lead applicant is different.

E. Eligible Projects

Single City or Town

Projects must be focused on a single Massachusetts city or town (or neighborhood, if well-defined) and include active partners located in that community. Generally, applicants should base their project proposal on locally significant economic opportunities. The key is that the project is in direct response to a need or opportunity that the group has identified and deemed important in that geographic community.

Project Categories

The primary funding priorities of the program, based on the development continuum outlined in the Community One Stop for Growth, will be Community Activation and Placemaking, specifically Equitable Workforce and Business Development Programming. Project categories include 1) Entrepreneurship, Small Business Development and Technical Assistance, 2) Workforce Development, Training Initiatives, and Job Pipelines, and 3) Community Organizing and Leadership Development.

Due to the breadth of the category, applicants selecting “Community Organizing and Leadership Development” must clearly state how their project is related to the economic opportunity or need their community has identified to be selected. This includes providing specific and measurable outputs and outcomes. Non-economic outcomes are unlikely to be competitive.

For projects focused on workforce development, the project must reflect alignment with the [Regional Labor Market Blueprint](#) for the area where the project will take place, and/or outline changes in priority sectors due to the pandemic. In all cases, the applicant should describe any coordination with MassHire partners.

Expressions of Interest

Applicants are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest through the One Stop for Growth to receive early-stage feedback about whether their project is well suited to the Urban Agenda program.

Applicants seeking funding for the same project from any other operating grant programs operated by EOED will be considered by all programs simultaneously. EOED may elect to fund a successful applicant through only one grant program.

F. Allowable Use of Funds

Urban Agenda grants may be utilized for all reasonable expenses associated with the implementation of the proposed project plan during the approximately 6-month grant period. Generally, the budget should include the costs for personnel, consultants, partner agency subcontracts, supplies and materials, etc. The budget may include indirect overhead costs; the grant program will not reimburse indirect costs exceeding 15% of the total budget.

While not required, applicants are also asked to identify match funds, if any. Additional consideration is given to applications that include in-kind and/or cash support from the municipality, other organizations, and/or private sources.

Capital expenses, including real estate purchase, construction, and/or renovation, are not eligible uses of funds for this program.

II. EVALUATION

EOED will carefully and thoroughly evaluate each complete proposal. Specifically, each complete grant application that is submitted in the Community Activation and Placemaking category, Equitable Workforce and Business Development Programming project type, and is seeking consideration for funding from the Urban Agenda Program, will be reviewed and scored on a 100-point scale based on the following criteria:

Target Population

- Well-defined target population that will benefit from the project.
- Members of the target population have been engaged in developing and/or carrying out the project.
- Clear articulation of how the project will advance equitable opportunities in the community.

Outcomes & Impacts

- Specific and measurable outcomes tied to the community-identified economic need or opportunity.
- Impacts are reasonable given the scope of the project and the size of the grant request.

Project Need

- Articulation of the identified economic need/opportunity that the project will address.
- Description of how the project's activities directly respond to the opportunity.
- Evidence that project has deep and broad ties to community and project's goals reflect the community's priorities.

Collaboration and Partnerships

- Existing community coalition or collaboration with a thoughtful and intentional group of partners.
- Active and ongoing coalition participation in project planning and implementation.
- Innovation of the collaboration: leveraging existing strengths and developing new local capacity and leadership.

Capacity to Succeed

- Logical progression from scope of work described to the outcomes and impacts anticipated.
- Evidence of strategic, timely and equity-oriented project planning and/or implementation thus far.
- Clear and appropriate project timeline outlining key benchmarks, preferably on a monthly basis.
- Detailed budget, including total project budget, allocation of the requested grant funds, and reasonable overhead costs.

A. Award Decisions

Applicants who are approved for funding will receive an award letter outlining the grant amount and any conditions of the award. All awards are subject to annual state budget appropriation and contingent upon full execution of a contract. Applicants who are not recommended for funding during the round will also be notified in writing.

APPENDIX: ACCESSING THE ONLINE APPLICATION

All applications to the Urban Agenda Grant Program must be submitted electronically through the Community One Stop for Growth application process. The application will be available and accepted through the IGX Platform, accessed at <https://eohed.intelligrants.com>. A user account is required. Below are the steps for getting into the system.

The municipality should activate a primary account with the municipal CEO and/or designee(s) as a “Grant Administrator”. This person(s) can then add other users, as necessary.

Current Admin Users – Municipal CEOs and/or designees who have used the IGX system in past rounds may use their existing usernames to access the system. Applicants that have forgotten their username and/or password must use the "Forgot Username/Password" function on the IGX login page.

New Organizations – If your organization has not accessed the system in the past, a new registration is required. This should be done by the municipal CEO and/or a designee. Click the “New Organization? Register Here” link to complete and submit a registration request. When that account is approved by EOHEd, an email notification will be sent from the system confirming designation as a Grant Administrator.

NOTE: All new requests for Grant Administrator must be approved by EOHEd. These will be reviewed as they are received. Applicants will get an email notification from the system confirming the approval. If confirmation not received after 48 hours, please contact onestop@mass.gov to request assistance.

New User in Existing Organizations – Once a Grant Administrator is established for your organization, that user(s) may then create and/or approve additional accounts for municipal staff and/or consultants, such as grant writers, engineers, etc. Requests for access to IGX should be made directly to your community’s Grant Administrator.

Creating a new Full Application or Expression of Interest – Once accounts are registered and/or approved, a Grant Administrator can create an Expression of Interest or Full Application(s), from the “My Opportunities” panel, and following the prompts in the portal. Any designated user may access, edit, and/or save an application on behalf of their organization, and are encouraged to save their work often, particularly after completing each section. Only a Grant Administrator will be able to create and submit the Expression of Interest and Full Application(s).

Submitting an application – Applications may be edited in IGX at any time up until the deadline. Official submissions to the Community One Stop for Growth will only be accepted during the posted dates. During that timeframe, Grant Administrators may submit the Full Application by selection the “Submit Full Application” option at the bottom of the left side menu, to officially submit an application. Applicants will receive an email confirming receipt within 24 hours. If an email is not received after 24 hours, please contact onestop@mass.gov for assistance.

NOTE: If an application is erroneously submitted, the applicant may contact onestop@mass.gov to reopen the application for further editing and completion, as long as it is before the deadline. Staff will try to accommodate these requests as they are received but may not be able to respond to all requests immediately. Once reopened, it is the responsibility of the applicant to resubmit prior to the deadline.